



Michigan Library Association

MICHIGAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION • 1407 RENSEN STREET • SUITE 2 • LANSING, MI 48910
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To: Honorable Michigan Representatives and Senators

From: Gretchen Couraud, Executive Director

Date: March 25, 2009

Re: MLA Position – Library Services in a Restructured State Government

In anticipation of Governor Granholm's Executive Order calling for the elimination of the Department of History, Arts and Libraries and the 2009-10 budget process, the Michigan Library Association Board of Directors adopted a position on Library Services in a Restructured State Government.

Attached for your review is the Michigan Library Association's position. In summary, the Michigan Library Association strongly believes that ongoing state support for library services is vital to success in the 21st century economy.

We urge the Governor and Legislature to:

- Maintain library services within state government and keep their functions whole under the Library of Michigan in the Department of Education, Department of Management and Budget or a new department of Administrative Services.
- Maintain state aid to public libraries at \$10 million in 2009.
- Retain the position and role of the State Librarian.

Given the complexities of this issue, this position statement gives significant background on library services and operations for your consideration and deliberation.

If you have questions or concerns, you may contact me at: couraudg@mlcnet.org or at (517) 394-2774 ext. 224.



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Policy Position

Library Services in a Restructured State Government March, 2009

Introduction:

Governor Granholm announced the elimination of the department of History, Arts and Libraries in her State of the State address and further consolidation of state government departments from 18 to 8 appears to be a realistic possibility. The Governor and Legislature are working to restructure government to protect vital services which meet the needs of Michigan residents and Michigan's changing economy.

With this in mind, and with the changing nature of library services in Michigan, the Michigan Library Association has adopted a policy position to guide the Legislature and articulate the valuable role of state government as it pertains to library services.

Historical Perspective:

As leaders reflect upon the future home and functions of the Library of Michigan and statewide library services, it is important to note that the Library of Michigan has resided in the Department of Education, under the State Legislature and in the Department of History, Arts and Libraries. Because of the varied nature of library services, including information, technology, education and literacy, workforce and economic development and local government regulation and finance, there are many departments where library services could be placed.

It is the position of the Michigan Library Association that the final decision should retain the Library of Michigan and statewide library services whole, in one place, as one unit. The Library of Michigan is the Library for all Michigan citizens. It serves critical functions in statewide oversight of library services such as statutory oversight of funding, elections, library establishment and state aid distribution. It has also achieved significant successes in statewide collaboration and governmental cost savings such as statewide group purchasing of online databases, saving \$72 million. This is a model that works and should be replicated by local school districts and municipalities.

Vital and Changing Role/Functions of Libraries in the 21st Century:

As Michigan transitions to a knowledge-based economy dependent on technology, Michigan's libraries play a pivotal role. Libraries are, and have been, throughout history, the keepers of knowledge and information. They collect, preserve, index, and provide access to authoritative information for residents and legislators – information moving

always available through Google or other search engines. Libraries are where people go to find information. Libraries play a vital role in:

- **Workforce Development**
 - Libraries offer workforce development tools and assistance such as: computers to submit online job applications; job search materials; computer classes; resume writing and interviewing workshops; career and job testing; and more. MI Works Agencies frequently refer clients to their library for resume writing instruction, online job search information, and career testing. At least seven libraries in Michigan serve as service center locations or access points for MI Works.
 - Every library in Michigan has access to the Michigan eLibrary which provides a wealth of premium, authoritative online databases for success in career preparation, school and beyond.
 - Learning Express is an online database for online certification and training including: GED, ACT, Civil Service, ASVAB, PSAT, AP tests and nursing and police and fire certification.
- **Technology** – Every library in Michigan offers computer and internet access to residents at no charge. Libraries are often the only source of free public access to computers in communities. Michigan eLibrary (MeL.org) is a statewide online library system available 24/7 to all Michigan residents.
- **Economic Development** – Many libraries have small business development centers and business librarians who assist small businesses with online market research and development and offer classes to support business development.
- **E-government** – government information is moving online and libraries are frequently the only access point to file for unemployment, find foreclosure information or file taxes.
- **Education and Literacy** – serving newborns to senior citizens, libraries provide education through reading readiness, summer reading programs, tutoring, after-school programming, adult literacy, online tools, ACT testing and more. They also serve as the library for Michigan's charter schools and home-schooling families.

Statewide Role/Functions of the Library of Michigan and the State Librarian:

The Library of Michigan and the State Librarian play a vital role in statewide collaboration and purchasing, statewide library oversight (data collection, legal and regulatory guidance, funding distribution) and national representation for Michigan.

Statewide Collaboration and Purchasing

The library community is the only community to successfully cross all governmental and jurisdictional lines and budgets to purchase collaboratively on a statewide basis, saving Michigan's taxpayers money. Specifically, in 2006, through statewide collaboration and a federal grant, the Library of Michigan spent \$3.9 million for Michigan eLibrary – high-tech

online database information. Every single library in the state is connected - public, school, community college, and university libraries (public or private). If every library had purchased these databases independently, taxpayers would have paid \$72 million. These federal funds are for pilot projects and will eventually need to be replaced by state dollars.

MelCat is a statewide catalog of materials available throughout the state in 348 libraries which use it to loan books, DVDs, CDs and other materials to one another. MelCat experienced a 19% increase in usage last year. More libraries join the system annually, creating a statewide borrowing and lending system, saving taxpayers money.

Statewide Library Oversight

The Library of Michigan maintains a statewide view of the highest quality library services for Michigan residents, businesses and government for all types of libraries in Michigan. The Library of Michigan, as a state agency, has significant statutory authority and regulatory responsibility and serves as the legal voice on Michigan library law. For example, the Library of Michigan provides legal oversight and guidance for public libraries on issues of funding, elections, library establishment, millages, state aid distribution, certification and promulgation of administrative rules that have the force of law. Similarly, as a state agency, they qualify to receive and distribute grants to libraries. For example, they received and distributed over \$2 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to provide libraries with 2,144 computers and meet the needs of unemployed workers needing access for unemployment claims and job seeking activities. Federal grants that fund the Michigan eLibrary also flow through the Library of Michigan. The Library of Michigan has responsibility to track public library data for state and federal government. Finally, as a state agency, they serve as a resource for other state departments and agencies including the Attorney General's office, the state auditor, and the Department of Information Technology which houses servers for the Michigan eLibrary and the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

National Representation for Michigan

Though the state librarian plays an active role with all types of libraries within the state of Michigan, the state librarian also has a pivotal role advocating for the state at the national level and collaborating with the other forty nine states on issues of data gathering, national trends and best practices. National initiatives and federal monies for library projects flow into each individual state through the state librarian's office. For example, Library Services and Technology Act funds which are matched with some dollars from the state, have created the Michigan eLibrary which has many components such as a statewide database, interlibrary loan and delivery, and authoritative on-line databases. All of these vital services and more are available to every Michigan resident and help libraries to equalize the divide between the haves and have nots as well as allowing local libraries in Michigan to devote local monies to other library services not the least of which are economic development services.

Library of Michigan Programs, Collections and Foundation

The Library of Michigan offers essential programs and collections and the Michigan Library Foundation raises significant funding for the library. Highlights include: the Abrams Historical Genealogy Collection ranking as the fifth largest in the United States; the Rare Book Collection to preserve Michigan's printed history; special library services for blind and physically handicapped residents around the state; the Michigan Notable Books Program to promote Michigan's literary and cultural heritage; and Michigan Reads! One State, One Children's Book

to promote emergent literacy for children ages 0-7. The Library of Michigan Foundation has received nearly \$6 million in private donations, including over \$1.1 million in corporate support.

Erosion of Library Funding by Actions of the State:

While demand for library services increases during difficult times, every source of library funding is being cut by actions of the state legislature.

- State Aid - PA 89 calls for libraries to receive \$1.50 per capita. Full funding is \$15.4 million but state aid is currently at \$10 million. State aid to public libraries hasn't increased since 1998. Libraries received a 17% cut in state aid in 2007-08 and are currently receiving 96 cents per capita.
- Penal fines - which are constitutionally mandated to go to libraries, are frequently diverted to other uses by state laws including several sections of the Michigan Vehicle Code, the Motor Carrier Act the Motor Carrier Safety Act and the Code of Criminal Procedure.
- Tax Captures - Dedicated, separately voted library millage dollars are being diverted to other taxing authorities under the guise of economic development at an alarming rate through tax capture mechanisms approved by the State Legislature. With nearly 70% of library funding coming from voted library millages, this is a major concern. For illustration, Grand Rapids loses \$600,000 a year, Detroit loses over \$ 4 million per year and Litchfield Library, with a budget of \$60,000, loses \$27,960 to a tax increment financing authority. Battle Creek loses at least \$830,000 through tax capture. Herrick District Library, Holland area, loses \$263, 116 to a neighborhood enterprise zone. Capital Area District Library loses \$658,000 to tax capture annually.

Michigan Library Association Position:

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